

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 868

CE 017 132

AUTHOR McGivern, Patrick
TITLE Some Considerations for Career Education of Exceptional Students.
INSTITUTION Cleveland Heights - University Heights City School District, Cleveland Heights, Ohio.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 10p.
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Education; *Decision Making; Employment Practices; Employment Problems; *Equal Opportunities (Jobs); *Exceptional Persons; Guidance; *Handicapped Students; Social Adjustment; Vocational Counseling

ABSTRACT

Career educators have the awesome responsibility to provide realistic, practical, and effective preparation for the exceptional population to work in a world where all the opportunities and advantages of our society can be available to them in spite of disabling characteristics. On-the-job exploration or some kind of involvement with one who has a similar handicap helps the student to see that others with similar problems have succeeded. This experience can often be a source of great inspiration and can provide the exceptional student with the necessary fortitude to develop realistic career goals. Involvement of the child's parents/family/friends may also encourage mature career decision-making as well. The crises surrounding one's search for identity during the teen-age years is much more difficult for exceptional students, many of whom may not even have reached the level of development where they must confront the task of integrating the idea of a severe limitation into their self-concepts. Thus, the identity search is a longer, more difficult process and presents a strong argument for the early development of career education for exceptional children. In addition to developing a good self-concept and settling upon an identity, exceptional children must prepare for the prejudices they will encounter in all areas of society and especially in the work world. However, not only must the student do the preparation; the general public and business personnel departments must be informed about the responsible and often superior performance of the handicapped to counteract the practice of finding loopholes around legislation for the handicapped. (VB)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED156868

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS-UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Some Considerations for
Career Education
of Exceptional Students

Patrick McGivern
Clinical Teacher
Bellefaire Residential Treatment
and Child Care Center

Summer, 1976

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jack D. Ford
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND
USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

OE 017 132

Special thanks to Linda Herman, Career Education Coordinator at Bellefaire School. Her personal experience and our personal experience of her has awakened and inspired a realistic career consciousness for the exceptional.

Career educators have the awesome responsibility to provide realistic, practical, and effective preparation for our exceptional population to work in a world where all the opportunities and advantages of our society can be available to them in spite of disabling characteristics that they may have. To provide information about all possible careers relevant to the job market, meaningful to particular interests, and in line with the individual's fullest potential is no mean feat. Those who would attempt to prepare an exceptional student for a career must be highly flexible, very well informed about the student's interests and abilities, and quite acquainted with all instructional materials pertaining to the great variety of possible careers yet, perhaps most crucial in this process is the necessity to prepare the individual for the problems that may be encountered as a direct result of the configuration of his/her exceptionality.

Basically the process of career education for the exceptional may not be radically different from what would be considered merely good process for the normal. It may be only that the intensity and the precision of the guidance necessary, makes the difference. Emphasis on certain aspects of career development need to be made for each individual, but for the exceptional, a more concentrated and thoroughly planned effort must be developed to overcome the stigma of a serious deficit.

Each career educator has his/her own repertoire and each student has a predisposition to respond to various techniques in a certain way, e.g. role-playing may be very productive in one situation and highly destructive in another. It is left to the creativity of the career educator to determine the most effective way to present an issue to be considered by a particular student. Whatever its form, this must be specially individualized and sensitive preparation for career decision-making over and above what is regularly done in the course of career education. The purpose of this work is to present and discuss the most salient conflict areas in which a particular emphasis may need to be developed for an exceptional student in the contemplation of a career choice.

Many believe that the most central issue to deal with in counseling an exceptional student is the inevitable poor self-concept fostered by the need for special treatment and services. The segregation from the mainstream of education and the grouping with other exceptional children is often highly stigmatic and creates in many students the expectation that to compete with normals would be impossible. Not to minimize the idea that there is competition in the work-a-day world, emphasis would be better placed upon the development of a co-operative attitude toward a common endeavor. Instilling the idea that it is more productive to work together with others rather than to try to work against or to outdo others, may result in lessening a runaway fear of competition (see 1A in bibliography).

However, there are other exceptional students who will over-rate their abilities to compete, perhaps because of their relative lack of experience competing in the regular classroom. Again, the spirit of cooperation might be emphasized here as an alternative to competition. Aptitude test scores may also be used to bring a sense of reality back to one's estimation of one's ability as compared to the rest of the population.

On the job exploration, or some kind of involvement with one who has a similar handicap is often helpful for the student to see that there are others with similar problems who have succeeded. This experience can often be a source of great inspiration and can provide the exceptional student with the necessary fortitude to develop realistic career goals. Involvement of the child's parents/family/friends may also encourage mature career decision-making as well. A sense of pride and self-respect will be gained by setting sights for the job for which one is worthy (see 7,8 in bibliography)

It is not a condition peculiar to the exceptional adolescent that this period of development is fraught with crises surrounding one's identity. Although it is a common problem during the teenage years often extending to young adulthood, it is one which, for the exceptional student, is magnified considerably by the added factor of a disability. For many, consideration of possible careers is ludicrous at this point, because they are not yet aware of what their own values are. And for some, even their own general likes and dislikes. Many may not even have reached the level of development where they must confront the task of integrating the idea of a severe limitation into their self-concepts. Realization of their personal values and the amount of esteem in which they hold themselves must be the logical first steps to self-awareness (see 2 in bibliography).

This is a longer, more difficult process for those with a disability and it presents a strong argument for the early development of career education for exceptional children. It is important for them to recognize their individual differences at an early age so that they can get an early start in directions in line with their interests, abilities, and aspirations. It is as if their exceptionalities are already a strike against them in their competition for suitable employment. Consequently, there is no time to waste in preparing or even "over preparing" each exceptional child for his/her career. Often the extra qualification, e.g. a typing course, familiarization with the drill press, due to early career development will land the job for the exceptional employee that would not have been available with merely the equal qualifications of a normal applicant. The special student must not count on being hired out of sympathy. She/he must be as qualified as possible. If for no other reason than to enhance and maintain self-esteem and confidence. Regrettably, the laws supporting equal employment opportunities for the handicapped are too easily and frequently side stepped.

The main thrust in developing a realistic self-concept should center around the realization of the individual's fullest potential. Careful

and delicate interrogation surrounding the subject of the student's own abilities and disabilities may be the best initial technique in fostering career consciousness. The student him/herself probably knows better than anyone else what his true potentials are. Invoking the student to take an honest look at this area may be more productive than reams of vocational testing. For others, some combination of the two may be most fruitful. But the motivation to find out about oneself must be there (see 9 in bibliography)

This motivation may not be so easily forthcoming for many of our exceptional students. Many have acquired the cynical attitude that the work world is corrupt and decadent and that there are no very worthwhile jobs to be had out there. The impression that their needs and desires will always be provided for, is the crucial area for serious examination. The realities of a right livelihood in a non-utopian society and the satisfactions gained from an honest, fulfilling occupation cannot be over-emphasized, but they are truths that many will have to discover for themselves. Maturity has been defined as one's ability to survive independent of the support of others. Career educators must use their creativity to facilitate this discovery (see 3C in bibliography).

Self-concepts of many are seriously impaired by having had the need for special services on their school record. Most unhappily, it is a very real stigma which does exist in society. The public desperately needs to be educated on the often superior abilities of our exceptional population, the news media being probably the most powerful resource. Career educators of the exceptional have the formidable task of developing a sense of solid, unshakable confidence in the real abilities of their students to begin to overcome society's prejudices and biases against those who have needed special treatment. The students themselves must not be sheltered from these harsh realities. Role-playing unsympathetic job interviews may be helpful in preparing students for this additional burden and obstacle to their success. Those who cannot hide their handicaps will have to confront the cold fact that certain employers simply will not hire them because of their disability and in spite of their abilities and eagerness. Regrettably, this is a situation often fostered by corporate insurers.

Counseling a student for a career choice also requires a supreme amount of tact. Enthusiastic support of realistic career goals is highly beneficial, but it does not imply disapproval or frustration of those which would not seem so realistic. Discouragement by the career educator may alienate the student and destroy a very crucial relationship. It would be better to provide the student with the factual data about the abilities necessary to pursue the questionable career and let the student make his/her decision about the necessary qualifications. It may also be that the student has abilities of which the counselor is not aware. This does not preclude serious consideration of the student's known limitations. These must be dealt with openly and honestly as well, and strategies of circumvention must be developed.

Enough emphasis cannot be placed upon the importance of preparing special children for the prejudices that they will encounter in all areas of society and especially in the work world. The reactions of many people to the exceptional are embarrassment, **guilt**, and discomfort. Many may be given jobs out of sympathy as some "great humanitarian gesture" or merely to comply with equal employment legislation. They must be prepared for this subtle form of discrimination so that it does not come as a surprise and allow this discouragement to incapacitate them. They must be aware that they will have to prove their capabilities by the high quality of their productiveness. They must allow their work to speak for itself, so that they gain the respect of their employers and co-workers by their actions, not just by their qualifications.

Moreover, some may have to confront a provocative fellow worker on the job. Others may have to suffer through harsh criticism by a supervisor. Still others may have to deal with general resentment or intolerance of impaired functioning on the job or any combination of the above. For the exceptional student with emotional problems, any one of these conditions could be disastrous. These students must learn somewhere that they will have to steel their souls and their temperaments through these trials. The career educator had best prepare them for this (see 3B in bibliography).

It must also be impressed upon socially-maladjusted students that employers will not tolerate deviant behavior, especially when it conflicts with job objectives. They must also be made aware of how deleterious it is to future employability when one has been fired from a job, or when one has accumulated a criminal record of any kind. The difficulty that an ex-convict experiences finding employment should serve as a good example. The necessity of presenting work resumés from which they would be proud to have prospective employers research their backgrounds is as important for these students as the development of the themes of honesty, punctuality, and impulse control. The liabilities of excessive absenteeism must be reviewed as well, not only because they may hurt one's ability to keep a job, but also because they may hamper one's prospects for advancement of salary or promotion.

The simple gratifications one receives for 1) having completed an honest day's work, 2) being trusted and respected by fellow employees, 3) taking on the extra responsibility for an even greater sphere of activity, and 4) accumulating good credit and security in the community are icings on the cake. They are often the sources of motivation which may facilitate the earlier development of career objectives. These positive incentives should be emphasized as they are some of the rewarding factors which make the difficult experience worthwhile (see 3C in bibliography).

Aside from the very involving process of educating an exceptional student for a career, there is another population for whom career education may be equally as important in the long-run. This population is the general public and especially the personnel departments of all businesses. They must be informed of the responsible and often superior performance of

handicapped people in all facets of industry.

Today it is true that in many large corporations and in small business alike, only token, low-entry, minimum wage employment is available for handicapped people. And these are often dead-end jobs in which there are no opportunities for advancement. It is pathetic that, in spite of considerable, substantial preparation for a promising career, and public law which ensures equal employment opportunities for all qualified applicants, the handicapped are still cummarily discriminated against.

Militancy against this condition may be the only effective response. There must be no reservation in the filing of complaints or suits for the infringement of the exceptioanl person's rights to opportunities for equal employment. These complaints may be filed at the Ohio State Civil Rights Commision.

Legislation officially took effect on July 23, 1976, which provides handicapped Ohioans with a "bill of rights". This new law is designed to protect them from discrimination in housing, employment, credit, and insurance. The same protection provided under Ohio Civil Rights Law on the basis of race, religion, sex, or ancestry. The passage of this bill in a recent legislative session ended a five-year battle for such a statute. The law also provides a special incentive for businesses to remove architectural barriers that limit accessibility to the disabled by offering a special reduction on the corporate franchise tax for those employers (see 10 in bibliography). It is a Federal Insurance requirement that all public buildings are accessible to the handicapped; however the Equal Employment Opportunity Commision (a federal agency) does not accept complaints concerning employment discrimination on the basis of physical/emotional/mental handicaps.

It is believed that state court proceedings concerning alleged violations of the "bill of rights" will ultimately result in conflicting testimonies of medical doctors over whether the plaintiff's handicap or disability would preclude qualification for the position in question. There will likely be considerable controversy over a section of the law which states that an employer is said not to be required to hire a handicapped person when she/he would present "occupational hazards". This may be a "loophole" in that this key section of the law could be interpreted in many ways. Nevertheless, important precedents will be set at these trials which will in many ways affect the future employability of the handicapped. Hopefully, this legislation will be effective.

News media coverage may evoke the additional leverage of public sympathy. But beyond that, the news media may be called upon to become involved in a much more positive and constructive way. This would be in terms of facilitating the education of the general public at large about the eagerness of many of those who have had a need for special services to pursue

meaningful career goals and to excel in their chosen fields. Advertising the need for businesses to adapt machinery, and equipment for the potential use of the handicapped, furnishing ramps for easy access, and redefining job descriptions to accommodate certain disabled people may be highly beneficial to our society as a whole. Hiring the handicapped should be presented not as a humanitarian gesture but as a responsible means to efficient, cost-effective production - good economic policy, as well as being a source of inspiration to co-workers.

The news media can create a climate of opinion and understanding among the general public wherein the stigma of having had the need for special treatment is not automatically regarded as a liability in the world of work, but rather as a possible asset. The media should be encouraged to present special cases where individuals have overcome or compensated for disabling characteristics to become valuable workers and leaders in various areas of endeavor. Equally important as preparing a special student early for suitable employment may be informing prospective employers that our exceptional population is vastly more able than disabled.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
and
SUGGESTED REFERENCES

1. Adolescent Conflict Series: Guidance Associates; Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc. New York.
 - a) Coping with Competition (1974)
 - b) Dealing with Anger (1973)
 - c) The Changing Work Ethic (1973)
2. Search for Meaning: Dimensions of Personality (1974). The Center for Learning, Villa Maria, Pa. for Pflaum/Standard.
3. Job Attitude Series: Guidance Associates - (see above number 1)
 - a) A Job that Goes Somewhere (1970)
 - b) Trouble at Work (1970)
 - c) Why Work At All (1970)
4. Kimball, G., and Vineyard, B., Succeeding in the World of Work, McKnight Publishing Co., Bloomington, Illinois, 1974
5. Individualized Related Instruction for Entering the World of Work, McKnight Publishing Co., Bloomington, Illinois, 1974.
6. Kimball, G. and Vineyard B., Activities for Succeeding in the World of Work, McKnight Publishing Co., Bloomington, Illinois, 1974.
7. Gelatt, H.B., et. al., Deciding College Entrance Examination Board, New York, 1973
8. Gelatt, H.B., Decisions and Outcomes, College Entrance Examination Board, New York, 1973
9. Occupational Viewdeck, Chronicle Guidance Publications, Moravia, New York, 1972.
10. "Law takes effect for handicapped", The Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio, June 30, 1976, p. 20 - A.